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Nizwa's Cultural Tourism: Catalyst for Reviving Heritage, Empowering Growth

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Abstract

Purpose: The study was to determine the impact of cultural tourism on the development and local economy in Nizwa and to investigate the role of cultural attractions and activities on Nizwa's tourism development as the cultural capital of Oman.

Design/methodology/approach: This study utilizes the quantitative research approach. The snowball sampling technique was applied to collect the samples. The target population was 50 and the target population consisted of both local people and international tourists. For data handling, Microsoft Excel was used to organize and manage the responses, while the JASP statistical software facilitated efficient computation of the analyses.

Findings: The study identified a positive influence of both tourism attractions and tourism activities on the development of cultural tourism in Nizwa. It further established that economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions collectively contribute to the city's cultural tourism growth.

Research Implications: Key economic drivers include job creation and revenue generation through heritage sites like Harat Al-Aqr. Social impacts stem from Nizwa's historical legacy and its role in fostering cultural exchange through festivals and markets. Environmentally, the renovation of heritage sites and adaptive reuse of old buildings enhance sustainability and visual appeal. Culturally, strong local identity and pride, reinforced by iconic attractions such as Nizwa Fort and Souq, promote community engagement and heritage appreciation.

Social Implications: Cultural tourism in Nizwa enhances social cohesion by safeguarding heritage, promoting traditional practices, and reinforcing community identity. It also facilitates meaningful cultural exchange between locals and tourists, fostering mutual understanding while supporting the livelihoods of local artisans and traditional craftspeople.

Originality / Value: This study offers a novel contribution by addressing a relatively underexplored area within the context of Oman. Nizwa stands out as a prominent example of a cultural heritage city in the GCC region, making it an ideal case for examining the broader implications of cultural tourism development.

Keywords: Cultural Tourism, Local economy, Tourism Development, environmental conservation, community engagement.

Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the most important sectors of economic development and one of the most impactful in today's communities. The tourism industry sector has a direct impact on the global economy as it generates more than two trillion USD and it impacts up to 9% of the global GDP (Negero 2020). In the recent past, Cultural tourism has gained momentum, which is nothing but the movements of people for essential cultural motivations such as performing arts, cultural tours, visits to sites and monuments, and travel to study the country's history and culture (Kajzar, 2014).

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Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism mainly involves tourism activities that are linked to culture (Duhme, 2012; Walle, 1999). Richards and Munsters (2010) defined cultural tourism as the movement of people from one destination to another intending to gather information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs. The definition describes why travelers travel and the purpose of traveling is to get more information and experience of the destination culture. Cultural tourists are the tourists who visit tourist sites to explore, discover, and learn new information about the heritage and history of the destination. Many tourists have an interest in learning more about cultural and historical heritage. This growth is driven by an increasing number of tourists who are interested in experiencing and understanding different cultures, histories, and traditions. Unlike other types of tourism, cultural tourism boosts the sense of humor in discovering and joy in the knowledge that people need to know more about a specific destination.

Cultural tourism is very effective. It significantly boosts the local economy by generating income through attractions, accommodations, and local businesses. It creates opportunities for jobs and supports the preservation of cultural heritage, attracting tourists and residents to visit and experience the cultural tourism of the area.

According to Duhme (2012) cited by Richard (2011), there are eight categories of cultural tourism is classified into eight categories viz.

1. Archeological sites and museums – these sites are visible sites where tourists can enjoy seeing the cultural heritage of the place.
2. Architecture
3. Art, crafts galleries, festivals, and events – all these can be arranged for tourists to enjoy the experience of the area.
4. Music and dance
5. Drama
6. Language and literature study
7. Religious festivals, and
8. Complete cultural and sub-cultures.

The cultural tourism categories can be divided according to the type of attractions and activities that are available in the area.

Cultural Tourism in Nizwa, Oman

Cultural tourism in Oman has witnessed significant growth, with Nizwa emerging as a key destination due to its rich history, traditional lifestyle, and religious significance. Known as the cultural capital of Oman, Nizwa is located in the heart of the Sultanate and is home to several heritage sites that attract both local and international visitors.

Key attractions include:

- **Nizwa Grand Mosque (Sultan Qaboos Mosque)**: The second-largest mosque in Oman, known for its stunning architecture and peaceful ambiance. Located centrally near Nizwa Fort and the traditional souq.
- **Nizwa Fort**: A major symbol of Omani identity, built in the 17th century by Imam Sultan bin Saif Al Ya'rubi. It includes a mosque within its premises and offers deep insights into the city's religious and historical heritage (Al Riyami et al, 2021; El Amrousi, 2001). Renovated in 1993, it remains the most visited fort in Oman.
- **Falaj Daris**: One of the largest traditional irrigation systems (aflaj) in Oman and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Al Harthi et al., 2015). Dating back to 2500 BC, it supports local agriculture and serves as a key cultural and environmental attraction.
- **Nizwa Souq**: One of the oldest traditional marketplaces in Oman, offering local products such as silver khanjars, Omani halwa, dates, spices, and livestock. The souq is especially vibrant during the Friday animal market and before major festivals (Al Riyami et al., 2021).

Nizwa represents both community and religious/spiritual tourism, offering a unique experience that connects visitors with Oman's deep-rooted cultural and religious traditions. In 2019, Nizwa received more than 131,108 tourists 88,536 were Omanis while 42,572 were expatriates (NCSI, 2019).

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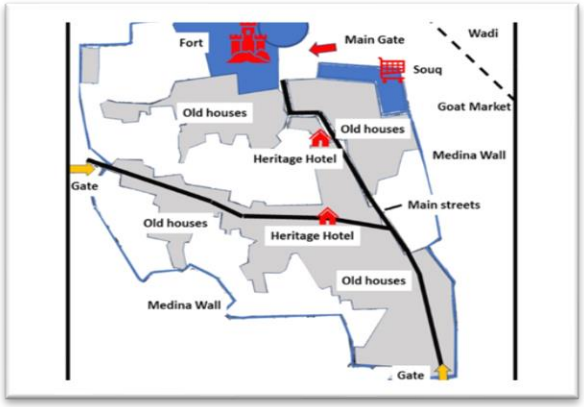

Figure 1. Nizwa Fort and Souq Map with cultural sites

Classifications of Cultural Tourism in Nizwa, Oman

Nizwa, the cultural capital of Oman, offers diverse forms of cultural tourism that contribute significantly to the local economy and heritage preservation. The main types include:

1. Religious Tourism

Nizwa holds deep Islamic significance, once known as the 'Egg of Islam' due to its rich scholarly history and iconic mosques such as the 'Nizwa Grand Mosque' and 'Masjid as-Shawadina'. As a former capital in 793 C.E., it remains a center for religious learning and spiritual tourism (Bandyopadhyay, 2005).

2. Heritage Tourism

Oman is the perfect example of a cultural tourism destination among the Middle Eastern countries and the most popular cultural tourism destination is in Nizwa, as Nizwa is one of the oldest cities and the cultural capital of Oman, located in the governorate of Ad Dakhiliyah. Nizwa is renowned for historical sites like 'Nizwa Fort', 'Falaj Daris', 'The Traditional Mountain Village at Jabal al Akhdar' and 'Souq Nizwa', along with nearby UNESCO sites.

Instead of focusing solely on traditional infrastructure development, investments should prioritize creating unique, innovative experiences that give Oman a distinct competitive edge in tourism. While restoring forts and castles, reviving heritage villages, or preserving wadis may seem less economically lucrative, these cultural and natural assets are key attractions that draw significant visitor interest. Their preservation plays a vital role in stimulating broader private-sector investment across the tourism value chain. Therefore, the government needs to recognize and support these elements as a strategic focus of public sector investment (THR Innovative Tourism Advisers, 2016).

Of late, several investments in the heritage and cultural attractions in and around Nizwa have been made by the Government of Oman. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism website has promoted many heritage and cultural resources in Oman to the UNESCO cultural tourism sites, such as Bahla Fort, the third-century archaeological sites of Bat, Al-Khutm, and Al-Ayn in the Al-Dhahira Governorate, the three falaj – Falaj Daris, Falaj Alkhatmeen (Nizwa) and Falaj Almalki (Izki), Manah and AL Jabal Alakdhar, as well as Jabal Shams, the highest mountain in Oman and the old towns of Alhamra (Al Riyami et al, 2021).

Figure 2. Oman Across Ages Museum

Museums such as 'Oman Across Ages Museum', 'Nizwa Museum', and 'Bait Al Safah preserve and showcase the city's cultural legacy, heritage, and civilization (Foreign Ministry of Oman, 2023; Times News Service, 2023). These attractions draw both local and international tourists, supporting local businesses and crafts.

In Nizwa, both residents and tourists can visit museums to learn about the city's rich history and heritage. Oman Across Ages Museum is an impressive cultural site that showcases Oman's journey from ancient times to the present. It offers an immersive experience that highlights Nizwa's historical significance while also reflecting the country's overall development.

3. Eco-Cultural Tourism

Eco-cultural tourism is defined as 'natural areas that conserve the environment, sustain the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education'. It includes environmentally sustainable practices, the use of local resources like old houses, and activities that showcase local traditions. Moreover, eco-cultural tourism utilizes a wide range of natural resources and cultural ecosystem services to improve income through the sale of goods (food and handcrafts, etc.) and service charges such as parking fees, tour guides, house rentals, and entrance fees (Lee & Jan, 2018).

This form blends environmental sustainability with cultural heritage. Examples include:

- **Anat Café** in Haret Al-Aqr, a restored heritage home turned café in a 1,200-year-old neighborhood (Times News Service, 2021).
- **Birkat Al Mouz**, is a scenic village with ancient falaj irrigation (Falaj Daris), banana plantations, and mudbrick houses, offering insight into traditional Omani life (Shankar and Sebastien, 2019).

  Cultural tourism in Nizwa not only promotes heritage and history but also boosts the local economy through job creation, small businesses, and tourism services. Investments in preservation and cultural experiences ensure sustainable tourism development in the region. Cultural tourism in Nizwa creates local job opportunities, with residents operating cafés, and souq shops, and transforming traditional buildings into heritage-style accommodations.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of cultural tourism on the development and local economy in Nizwa?
2. What is the role of cultural attractions and activities in Nizwa's tourism development as the cultural capital of Oman?

Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the impact of cultural tourism on the development and local economy in Nizwa.
2. To investigate the role of cultural attractions and activities on Nizwa's tourism development as the cultural capital of Oman.

Review of Literature

Impact of cultural tourism in Nizwa

Economic Impacts of Tourism Development in Nizwa

Nizwa has witnessed significant investment in various development initiatives, including the Dakhliyah Boulevard Project, the Nizwa Gate Investment Project, and projects by the Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran), all of which contribute meaningfully to the city's economic and social advancement. One notable example is the Anat Café, established within a historically significant archaeological site estimated to be over 1,200 years old. According to Times News Service (2021), the Anat café owner also initiated a heritage inn project, where traditional homes were restored and repurposed as heritage tourism accommodations. This initiative has enhanced the tourist experience while generating economic and social benefits for the local community creating a new revenue stream. The rise in tourism-related activities has led to increased revenues through entrance fees and other services, which are reinvested in tourism infrastructure and local development (Foreign Ministry of Oman, 2023; Times News Service, 2021).

Cultural tourism, particularly in heritage-rich areas like Nizwa Fort and the Nizwa Souq, has become a major contributor to local economic growth. Despite the positive developments in these areas, scholars argued that achieving sustainable economic growth through tourism requires strategic policy considerations, including greater openness to tourism markets (Cheng & Zhang, 2020; Fernandes et al., 2019).

Moreover, studies emphasized the importance of effective governance and low corruption levels in enhancing a destination's global credibility, which, in turn, helped attract more international tourists (Lee & Chen, 2021; Mushtaq et al., 2021). Recently, institutional quality has emerged as a critical factor in maximizing the

economic potential of tourism development. Strong institutional frameworks are seen as pivotal in enabling long-term economic benefits from tourism initiatives (Sun et al., 2025).

Social Impacts of Tourism Development in Nizwa

Nizwa is widely recognized for its dynamic cultural identity, which is reflected in its annual festivals and weekly souq events. These gatherings play a crucial role in promoting cultural exchange, fostering community interaction, and preserving local heritage. As highlighted by Al Riyami et al. (2021), such events are integral to the city's tourism strategy, which is firmly grounded in sustainability and aims to protect both cultural and natural resources for future generations.

Efforts to harmonize tourism development with heritage conservation are visible across several prominent cultural landmarks, including Anat Café and the city's museums. These venues serve as both social and economic assets, offering authentic cultural experiences that strengthen community ties while supporting local livelihoods (Al Riyami et al., 2021). Anat Café, in particular, exemplifies the city's approach to adaptive reuse, having transformed historical structures into culturally immersive spaces that engage both residents and visitors.

A notable example of cultural preservation through tourism is the Nizwa Museum. According to Times News Service (2023), the museum provides visitors with a rich historical narrative of Oman's trade, religious, and educational heritage. Its exhibits include a remarkable collection of geological and cultural artifacts dating back approximately 260 million years, highlighting the deep historical roots of the region and further enhancing its value as a cultural tourism destination.

Equally significant is the role of Nizwa Souq, one of the oldest and most traditional marketplaces in Oman. Beyond its economic function, the souq acts as a vital social hub where residents and traders from various Omani tribes gather to exchange goods, services, and ideas. This ongoing interaction not only sustains traditional commercial practices but also fosters social cohesion and cultural continuity (Al Riyami et al., 2021).

Environmental Impacts of Cultural Tourism in Nizwa

Cultural tourism in Nizwa has brought about multifaceted environmental and community-based transformations. According to Al-Hasni and Afifi (2021), while fostering a sense of cultural pride among residents and contributing to economic growth, cultural tourism also presents opportunities for environmental enhancement through heritage preservation. Striking a balance between the needs of tourists and local communities has led to greater investment in the restoration and maintenance of historic sites, contributing positively to the city's visual appeal and environmental cleanliness.

The process of renovating and reconstructing heritage sites not only revitalizes the city's historical aesthetic but also encourages the adoption of traditional architectural elements, reinforcing Nizwa's cultural identity. Al-Hasni and Afifi (2021) emphasized that this dynamic interplay between preservation and adaptation is essential for achieving long-term sustainability in cultural tourism. The use of traditional village layouts and design principles in restoration projects contributes to an environmentally harmonious urban landscape.

Efforts to promote sustainable cultural tourism have also been supported at the governmental level. As reported by Oman Observer (2017), the Ministry of Heritage and Culture agreed with the Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran) to advance heritage conservation initiatives, particularly in iconic locations such as Nizwa Fort. This collaboration aims to enhance the visibility of Oman's cultural wealth while ensuring the environmental sustainability of its heritage sites.

A notable grassroots initiative is the Heritage Inn project in the Al-Aqr neighborhood. By restoring traditional Omani houses and repurposing them as heritage accommodations, the project has successfully revived the architectural charm of the area while contributing to environmental preservation. According to Times News Service (2021), this initiative not only improved the aesthetic landscape but also demonstrated how heritage-based tourism can support sustainable urban development by maintaining historical authenticity and reducing the environmental footprint associated with modern construction.

The environmental impacts of tourism development in Nizwa reflect a positive trend toward heritage conservation, sustainable design, and community-led revitalization efforts. These actions collectively enhance the ecological quality of the city while preserving its cultural character for future generations.

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Cultural Impact

Cultural tourism in Nizwa plays a vital role in shaping residents' understanding of their past, present, and future, while also reinforcing personal and communal identity. As Al Riyami et al. (2021) highlighted, for local communities, cultural heritage fosters a sense of pride and belonging, whereas for the government, it serves as a strategic asset for sustainable regional development and national identity formation. The revitalization of Nizwa—Oman's oldest city—through investments by local stakeholders reflects how heritage resources can stimulate community engagement and urban renewal. The Oman Across Ages Museum, as noted by the Foreign Ministry of Oman (2023), exemplifies modern efforts to bridge tradition and innovation through interactive exhibitions that trace the nation's historical evolution. This has particularly strengthened the cultural awareness and identity of Omani youth. Additionally, landmarks such as Nizwa Fort symbolize national heritage and continue to attract both domestic and international visitors, offering an authentic experience of Oman's architectural legacy and historical narrative.

Overall Impact of Tourism *Attractions and Activities on Cultural Development*

Tourism attractions and cultural activities in Nizwa have had a profound and multifaceted impact on the city's development. Festivals, traditional markets, and artisan workshops support the preservation of crafts like pottery and silverwork, while also promoting intergenerational cultural exchange (Al Riyami et al., 2021). These initiatives not only reinforce community identity but also enhance the quality of the tourism experience by embedding local traditions into sustainable development strategies, as supported by UNESCO (2019). The restoration of heritage sites, such as Nizwa Fort, and the safeguarding of oral traditions have drawn a wide range of visitors, encouraging further investment in cultural infrastructure. As one of Oman's most prominent historical cities, Nizwa has successfully positioned itself as a cultural hub. The demand for authentic experiences drives the protection of heritage assets and empowers local artisans, performers, and entrepreneurs. As Malik et al. (2020) note, authenticity is central to tourist satisfaction, thereby motivating stakeholders to maintain historical accuracy and promote cultural pride. Overall, the intersection of tourism and cultural development in Nizwa fosters sustainable growth, economic opportunity, and the long-term preservation of Omani heritage.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research approach**,** with data collected through an online survey. As noted by Brannen (2005), effective data analysis involves the systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of information derived from surveys and interviews. The target population for this research included both residents and international tourists who had visited Nizwa. The purpose of the survey was to assess the perceived impact of cultural tourism on the development of Nizwa and its local economy. Specifically, the questionnaire examined tourists' awareness and understanding of Nizwa's cultural offerings, as well as the extent to which residents are engaged in and benefit from tourism-related development. A sample size of 50 participants was obtained using the snowball sampling technique**,** which enabled the researcher to reach a broader and more relevant group through participant referrals. For data handling, Microsoft Excel was used to organize and manage the responses, while the JASP statistical software facilitated efficient computation of the analyses.

Findings

Table 1. Frequency table for respondents (Demographics)

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	%
Nationality	Omani	35	70.0
	Non-Omani	15	30.0
Gender	Male	35	70.0
	Female	15	30.0
Age	20 and below	5	10.0
	> 20 – 35	38	76.0
	> 36 – 45	5	10.0
	46 to 60	2	4.0
	61 and above	0	0.0
Education	Secondary School	11	22.0
	Diploma	15	30.0
	Bachelors	22	44.0
	Master and above	2	4.0
Frequency of Visit	Never	1	2%

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	Weekly	3	6%
	Monthly	13	26%
	Yearly	6	12%
	Seasonal	27	54%
Reason for the visit	Cultural tourism sites	28	56%
	Others	10	20%
	Family visit	8	16%
	Adventure	4	8%
Purpose of Visit to Cultural Attractions	Heritage tourism	23	46%
	Religious tourism	5	10%
	Eco-cultural tourism	12	24%
	Heritage & Eco-cultural	5	10%
	Heritage & Religious	3	6%
	All the three	2	4%

From Table 1 it can be seen that most of the people visit Nizwa seasonally and monthly and it can also be seen that the main reason for tourists visiting Nizwa was non-mentioned reasons whereas few of the respondents mentioned it as for family visits and some other for adventure purposes. The purpose of visiting Nizwa was considered to be heritage tourism followed by eco-cultural tourism.

Table 2. Economic Impact of Cultural Tourism in Nizwa

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	K.S value	χ^2	p
Increasing the number of tourists & collecting entry fees to places like Haret Al-Aqr can generate more income	27 54%	18 36%	3 6%	1 2%	1 2%	.306		
Tourism sites like Haret Al-Aqr have provided local economic growth and job opportunities	27 54%	21 42%	1 2%	0 0%	1 2%	.309	25.040	.000
Involving the local community in developing the city can support investment and small businesses	26 52%	20 40%	2 4%	1 2%	1 2%	.292		

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between the Economic Impact and the choices of the respondents. From the above table, it can be seen that the p-value is less than 0.05 i.e., the null hypothesis gets rejected. Therefore, comparing the K-S values obtained from Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, it is observed that 'Tourism sites like Haret Al-Aqr have provided local economic growth and job opportunities' (.309) ranked first followed by 'Increasing number of tourists & collecting entry fee to places like Haret Al-Aqr can generate more income' (.306) and 'Involving local community in developing the city can support investment and small businesses' (.292).

Table 3. Social Impact of Cultural Tourism in Nizwa

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	K.S value	χ^2	p
Nizwa's rich history and status as a former center of trade, religion, and education impact society	27 54%	19 38%	3 6%	0 0%	1 2%	.310		
Nizwa's festivals and souq events gather locals and promote cultural exchange and ideas	24 48%	21 42%	4 8%	0 0%	1 2%	.276	21.680	.001
Nizwa's annual events promote appeal and cultural exchange	25 50%	22 44%	2 4%	0 0%	1 2%	.264		

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between the Social Impact and the choices of the respondents. From the above table, it can be seen that the p-value is less than 0.05 i.e., the null hypothesis gets rejected. Therefore, comparing the K-S values obtained from Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, it is observed that 'Nizwa's rich history and status as a former center of trade, religion, and education impacts society' (.310) ranked first followed by 'Nizwa's festivals and souq events gather locals and promote cultural exchange and ideas' (.276) and 'Nizwa's annual events promote appeal and cultural exchange' (.264).

Table 4. Environmental Impact of cultural tourism

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Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	K.S value	χ^2	p
Renovation and reconstruction of old heritage sites has increased tourism attraction and impact environmentally	27 54%	20 40%	2 4%	0 0%	1 1%	.309		
OMRAN has promoted sustainable tourism in Nizwa causing less harm to the environment	20 40%	23 46%	5 10%	1 2%	1 2%	.268	31.200	.000
The idea of renovating the neighborhood village (Harat Al-Aqr) and restoration of old buildings into hotels has a great environmental impact	24 48%	21 42%	3 6%	1 2%	1 2%	.270		

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between the Environmental Impact and the choices of the respondents.
From the above table, it can be seen that the p-value is less than 0.05 i.e., the null hypothesis gets rejected. Therefore, comparing the K-S values obtained from Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, it is observed that 'Renovation and reconstruction of old heritage sites have increased tourism attraction and impact environmentally' (.309) ranked first followed by 'The idea of renovating the neighborhood village (Harat Al-Aqr) and restoration of old buildings into hotels has a great environmental impact' (.270) and 'OMRAN has promoted sustainable tourism in Nizwa causing less harm to the environment' (.268).

Table 5. Cultural Impact of cultural tourism

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	K.S value	χ^2	p
Nizwa, the oldest city & the cultural capital of Oman, has a strong cultural impact	24 48%	22 44%	2 4%	1 2%	1 2%	.269		
A sense of pride & strength of local identity has motivated community involvement, awareness, and appreciation of Nizwa's cultural heritage	21 42%	24 48%	3 6%	1 2%	1 2%	.277		
Tourism attractions have become a source of national identity (such as museums) creating awareness and building relationships between the Omani youth and the country's heritage	22 44%	24 48%	3 6%	0 0%	1 2%	.258	37.120	.000
Tourist attractions like Nizwa Fort and Nizwa Souq create great cultural impact as they are key heritage attractions in Oman	24 48%	24 48%	1 (2%)	0 0%	1 2%	.275		

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between the Cultural Impact and the choices of the respondents.
From the above table, it can be seen that the p-value is less than 0.05 i.e., the null hypothesis gets rejected. Therefore, comparing the K-S values obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, it is observed that 'Sense of pride & strength of local identity has motivated community involvement, awareness and appreciation of Nizwa's cultural heritage' (.277) ranked first followed by 'Tourist attractions like Nizwa Fort and Nizwa Souq create great cultural impact as they are key heritage attractions in Oman ; (.275) and 'Nizwa, the oldest city & the cultural capital of Oman, has a strong cultural impact' (.269).
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Table 6. Overall Impact

	K.S value
Economic impact	.196
Social Impact	.177
Environmental	.167
Culture Impact	.177

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From Table 6 it can be seen that the overall mean of cultural impacts in Nizwa, which shows that economic impacts have the highest weighted mean of (.196) which indicates that most respondents had agreed with the statement in the survey, the second highest mean was both social impact and cultural impact (.177) while environmental impact has a weighted mean value of .167 which also constitutes a very high agreement among respondents.

Regression Analysis

Table 8. Regression Analysis

(a) Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	RMSE
H_1	0.959	0.920	0.917	0.185

[a]Predictors: Tourism Attractions and Tourism Activities

(b) ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	18.669	2	9.334	271.578	< .001
Residual	1.615	47	0.034		
Total	20.284	49			

[a]Dependent variable: Impact on Cultural Tourism Development (ICTD)
[b]Predictors: Tourism Attractions (TAt) and Tourism Activities (TAc)

(c) **Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.362	0.174		2.086	0.042
Tourism Attractions	0.572	0.061	0.628	9.367	< .001
Tourism Activities	0.342	0.060	0.382	5.697	< .001

[a]Dependent variable: Impact on Cultural Tourism Development (ICTD)

The p-value in the ANOVA table reflects p< .001 whereas the coefficients' p-values shown in the table for Tourism Attractions (<0.001) and Tourism Activities (<0.001) indicate values less than 0.05. Regression analysis has generated an R^2 value of 92% i.e. 92% of the samples influence the regression model.

Therefore, the derived regression equation is:
ICTD = 0.362 + 0.572 TAt + 0.342 Tac
where ICTD - Impact on Cultural Tourism Development, TAt – Tourism Attractions, TAc – Tourism Activities

From the above, it is clear that there is an association between Impact on Cultural Tourism Development, Tourism Attractions, and Tourism Activities whereas there is a positive influence of both Tourism Attractions and Tourism Activities on Impact on Cultural Tourism Development.

Discussion

From the above findings, it is clear that most people visit Nizwa on either a seasonal or monthly basis. The main reason for tourists visiting Nizwa was non-mentioned reasons whereas few of the respondents mentioned it as for family visits and some other for adventure purposes. The purpose of visiting Nizwa was considered to be heritage tourism followed by eco-cultural tourism.

Among the economic impact factors 'Tourism sites like Haret Al-Aqr have provided local economic growth and job opportunities' ranked first followed by 'Increasing number of tourists & collecting entry fee to places like Haret Al-Aqr can generate more income' and 'Involving local community in developing the city can support investment and small businesses'.

Among the social impact factors, 'Nizwa's rich history and status as a former center of trade, religion, and education impacts society' ranked first followed by 'Nizwa's festivals and souq events gather locals and promote cultural exchange and ideas' and 'Nizwa's annual events promote appeal and cultural exchange'.

Among the environmental factors, 'Renovation and reconstruction of old heritage sites have increased tourism attraction and impact environmentally' ranked first followed by 'The idea of renovating the neighborhood village (Harat Al-Aqr) and restoration of old buildings into hotels has a great environmental impact' and 'OMRAN has promoted sustainable tourism in Nizwa causing less harm to the environment'. This is similar to the findings by Kim and Nicolau (2025) who confirmed the growing impact of cultural globalization and the consequent need for tourism firms to leverage cultural assets strategically. Further, Al-Hasni & Afifi (2021) also claimed that the renovation and reconstruction of the old heritage site increase the beauty of look of the city as well as the cleanliness of the environment.

Among the cultural factors, 'Sense of pride & strength of local identity has motivated community involvement, awareness and appreciation of Nizwa's cultural heritage' ranked first followed by 'Tourist attractions like Nizwa Fort and Nizwa Souq create great cultural impact as they are key heritage attractions in Oman' and 'Nizwa, the oldest city & the cultural capital of Oman, has a strong cultural impact'. These findings are similar to the findings by AL Riyami et al. (2021).

Further, it was also found that there exists an association between Impact on Cultural Tourism Development, Tourism Attractions, and Tourism Activities whereas there is a positive influence of both Tourism Attractions and Tourism Activities on Impact on Cultural Tourism Development. This finding is consistent with the study by Swantari et al. (2024) which confirmed that infrastructure, facilities, and accessibility are significant factors influencing tourists' destination choices.

Overall, all four impacts – economic, social, environmental, and cultural, had an impact on the development of Nizwa.

This study builds on Richards' (2018) practical framework to examine how the interaction between meanings, resources, and competencies evolves within Nizwa's integrated development. The adaptive reuse of heritage hotels into cultural hubs illustrates how intangible heritage can be leveraged to create socio-economic and environmental value. This transformation enriches the visitor experience through authentic cultural engagement while promoting community participation, environmental stewardship, and inclusive economic growth in line with sustainable development objectives.

Conclusion

The study highlights that cultural tourism plays a pivotal role in the integrated development of Nizwa, influencing its economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions. Heritage and eco-cultural tourism emerge as the main purposes for visits, with tourists primarily drawn to the city on a seasonal or monthly basis. Key economic benefits include job creation and local business stimulation, especially around heritage sites like Harat Al-Aqr. Socially, Nizwa's historical prominence and cultural events foster community cohesion and cultural exchange. Environmentally, restoration and sustainable tourism practices have enhanced the city's appeal while preserving its ecological integrity. Culturally, tourism has reinforced local identity and pride, motivating increased community participation and cultural preservation.

Furthermore, the positive association between tourism attractions, activities, and cultural tourism development confirms that strategic investment in infrastructure and community engagement can amplify the benefits of tourism. These findings align with previous studies, affirming the importance of leveraging cultural assets for sustainable urban growth.

Recommendations

Based on the above, the following recommendations have been suggested:

- Enhance heritage site management by improving facilities, signage, and guided experiences to attract and retain more visitors.
- Encourage community-based tourism through training and support for local entrepreneurs in crafts, hospitality, and tour services.
- Promote sustainable tourism practices in collaboration with organizations like OMRAN to minimize environmental impact.
- Organize regular cultural festivals and workshops to preserve traditional crafts and strengthen cultural identity.

- Improve accessibility and infrastructure to ensure ease of travel and enhance the overall visitor experience.
- Implement targeted marketing campaigns focusing on Nizwa's unique cultural and historical assets to draw both domestic and international tourists.
- Establish monitoring systems to continuously assess the impact of tourism on Nizwa's development and adjust policies accordingly.

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